

USDA Rural Development, Red Cross, Missouri Baptist Convention Partner To Provide Shelter For Hurricane Katrina Survivors

At Least 1000 USDA Housing Units Available for Occupancy in Missouri



CAPE GIRARDEAU, Mo. Sept. 5, 2005 - Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development Thomas Dorr today visited Cape Girardeau, Mo. to speak with Red Cross officials and representatives of the Missouri Baptist Convention about an ongoing partnership with USDA Rural Development, which provides shelter to survivors left homeless by Hurricane Katrina.

"It is essential that safe housing be found for displaced residents as quickly as possible," said Dorr. "USDA is pleased to partner with the Southeast Missouri (SEMO) Red Cross and the Missouri Baptist Convention to help make this happen."

Cape Girardeau is one of several Missouri communities where evacuees are being taken for temporary resettlement. So far, USDA Rural Development has identified at least 1,000 vacant housing units in Missouri that are available to house displaced residents.

Missouri is one of a number of states where Rural Development rental units and homes are being made available to hurricane survivors. Large numbers of displaced residents from the hurricane are arriving in the Missouri area. As they arrive, they are received by the Red Cross and sent to Baptist youth camps in the area. The camps serve as temporary staging areas as families and individuals are moved into available USDA housing.

USDA's Rural Development also has designated a toll free number to assist homeowners, renters and others in need of housing assistance. The toll-free number is 1-800-414-1226. Information also is available on the USDA web site at: <http://www.usda.gov/usdakatrina.xml>.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life in rural communities. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development has invested over \$54 billion since the beginning of the Bush Administration to provide equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development and critical community and technology infrastructure. Over one million jobs have been created or saved

through these investments. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office.

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